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THE BRITISH ACADEMY

George Nathaniel Curzon

Marquess Curzon of Kedleston

1859-1925

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AMONG the Fellows elected to the British Academy in 1908 was George Nathaniel Curzon, Baron Curzon of Kedleston in the peerage of Ireland and heir to the English barony of Scarsdale. He was then forty-nine years of age, having been born on 11th January, 1859. After Eton and Oxford (where he had been President of the Union and had won the Lothian and Arnold Essay prizes and a Fellowship at All Souls) he entered the House of Commons in 1886 and held office as Under-Secretary for India (1891-2) and for Foreign Affairs (1895-8) before proceeding to India as Viceroy in 1899.

Curzon's election to the Academy was a fitting recognition of conspicuous services rendered during his Viceroyalty to various sciences, especially to history, archaeology, and art. But these services were neither the only ones nor the earliest that stood to his credit. As a young man he had devoted himself to geographical studies and enterprises to such purpose that he was awarded the Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society in 1895; and before he became Viceroy he had won recognition as a competent authority on the history, archaeology, and art not only of India, on whose monuments he was contemplating a treatise when the Viceroyalty was offered to him,¹ but also of Persia and other provinces of the Near and the Middle East. His career from first to last offers an exception to the rule that early entry to, and long service in, public affairs restrict scientific activities to a man's earliest and latest years. Curzon's scientific activity persisted throughout life, and hardly less of it was exercised, while he was actively engaged in politics or administration, than when he was comparatively free from those calls. Absolutely free he never was after 1886, not even during the decade which followed his resignation of the Viceroyalty in 1905 and ended with his inclusion in the Cabinet in 1915—a decade during which, moreover, he added to political activities the duties of Chancellor of

¹ Letter from Sir John Marshall, dated 27 March 1926. From this letter all my subsequent quotations of Sir John's words are taken.



the University of Oxford, of President of the Royal Geographical Society, and of Trustee of the National Gallery and of the British Museum. Subsequently, from 1915 to within a year of his death, he served continuously in the Cabinet, and for almost all that time led the House of Lords.

Had he not conceived in early years the highest political ambition—for when hardly more than an undergraduate he proposed to himself to be the first to become both Viceroy and Prime Minister—his life might well have been devoted primarily to science. He had the scientific conscience and the scientific mind. On any subject that appealed to his interest he went straight to original authorities, verifying their every reference, content with nothing short of their exhaustion. With tireless industry, patient endurance of pedestrian mental labour, the habit of accepting nothing, whether theory or fact, at second-hand, and a memory extraordinarily retentive of detail, he had all the essentials for scientific success. Probably he was never more content than when engaged in *Quellenforschung*, of which he enjoyed the process quite as much as the result. 'I once compiled a bibliography', he minuted on an Indian Government file (referring, no doubt, to the Appendix to his book on Persia). 'It is a work requiring much patience and concentration. But it is one of perfect ease.' Nothing was more congenial to his natural aptitudes than meticulously accurate recording; nothing less so than any sort of abstract speculation. A distaste for philosophy, owing to which he missed first-class honours in the School of Literae Humaniores at Oxford, remained characteristic throughout life.

According to his own statement, he formed about 1884 a project to study Asiatic problems in Asia itself, and, in particular, those involved in the geographical environment of India. His dream of the Viceroyalty had, doubtless, something to do with this choice of a continent; but the Asian Mystery had more. 'Asia', he wrote from a ship in the Red Sea to the present Lord Midleton,¹ 'looms before me vast, inscrutable, immutable!' In comparison he scorned all other continents and particularly the American, which he crossed in 1887 on his first tour round the world and first approach to India. In the following year came a chance to reach the heart of his chosen continent. The Trans-Caspian Railway had just been opened to Bokhara and Samarkand, and *The Times* wanted a description of a line then widely regarded in this country as designed for the ultimate invasion of India. But to a foreign, and especially a British, correspondent neither access to one railhead, nor transport to the other,

¹ So Lord Midleton in a letter, dated 29 Jan. 1926.



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was expected to be made easy. Curzon, now member for Southport, agreed, however, to make the attempt. He procured an invitation from General Annenkoff, Governor-General of Trans-Caspia; but, since this did not necessarily carry with it the consent of the Imperial Government, he had to go first to St. Petersburg. There, use diplomatic weapons as he might, he could obtain no papers. Refusing to abandon his project, he went on to Moscow. Equally unsuccessful there, he went still farther on his way in hope that the oriental element in Russian officialism would seek and find a line of less resistance than forcible stoppage of a British M.P. actually on his way to accept an official invitation. He was to try that game again on more occasions than one; and probably no traveller has ever played it with greater zest or a more effective personal deportment! Now, as later, it succeeded. At Vladikavkas the necessary papers were put into *The Times* correspondent's hands, and, meeting no further obstruction in Trans-Caucasia or in passing the Caspian to railhead at Uzun Ada, he stepped into the train which General Annenkoff had provided for his conveyance to Bokhara.

About this city enough mystery still hung for the journey to seem something of an adventure. Despite Lansdell, Vambéry, O'Donovan, and Schuyler, the traveller, as Curzon wrote, might 'yet confess a novel excitement as he threaded the bazaars of remote Bokhara' and be prepared for personal danger. To Britons at large it was still known for a place where one could be done to death like Stoddart and Conolly, while no word could come West except such as that which only forty years before the disguised emissary, Wolff, obtained at the risk of life. Little was known outside about the change that had come over Trans-Caspia since Skobelev's campaigns, and less about Russian capacity to assimilate Orientals of whatever creed. Curzon was, therefore, as much surprised as impressed to find that the Russian policy towards Moslems in Ukraine and the Crimea was being repeated with like success in fanatical Bokhara. He met with no sort of adventure or peril, went on by railway another 150 miles to Samarkand, and in a *tarantass* 200 miles more to Tashkent; and returning he passed back to the Caspian with as little difficulty. His one failure was to obtain leave to cross the Persian frontier to Kalat-i-Nadiri—a strong place so jealously kept from European eyes that it appealed to all his curiosity.

His journey had been undertaken, not for geographical ends but for political, and nothing in its itinerary brought the traveller anywhere near new ground. Nevertheless the resultant book, *Russia in Central Asia* (1889), proved to contain an immense amount of



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geographical fact. Wherever Curzon might find himself off the beaten track, he considered it as much his pleasure as his duty to collect all social material that he could, within the time limits of his sojourn, by the laborious use of every possible opportunity. Never was a traveller more conscientiously industrious, and more impossible to satisfy with anything short of the whole truth. Being who he was, he had access to the highest placed and best informed people; but that he got so much out of them was due less to the fact that he was an M.P. of high social standing, already marked for a coming man in British politics, than to a certain idiosyncrasy. He was an indefatigable, remorseless cross-examiner, who put behind him all consideration of the attitude of his witness towards cross-examination, and disregarded all times and seasons but his own. The writer once had it from a British official of the Persian Telegraph Service, at whose lonely house on the Teheran-Ispahan track Curzon stopped a night, that visitor kept host out of bed till the small hours putting every conceivable question about the surrounding district; and in the first of the morning he was ready with full précis of the overnight's evidence, which he made his host criticize, correct, and supplement before a start could be made for the next stage.

Curzon, reviewing his own career at a farewell dinner offered in 1898 on the eve of his assumption of the Viceroyalty, spoke, without false modesty, of his travel-books as indigestible; and, indeed, there are parts of *Russia in Central Asia* that are not much more literary than consular reports, which they closely resemble, or than a *Baedeker's Guide*, with which he protested in his preface that he challenged no comparison. But even these parts are more readable than another would have made them, being, like all the rest of the book, infused with a strong personality, thorough-going, of inexhaustible vitality, self-reliant to a fault, not always sympathetic, but consistently interesting. Curzon wrote his first book, as his last, in a singularly lucid style; and though not proof against the temptations of fine writing, he was never guilty of affectation. Natural beauties, like those of a sunset at Bokhara, genuinely moved him, and the infusions of purple in his descriptions reflect real, not transient, moods. That both wit and humour reveal themselves will surprise neither intimates, who shared his rare holiday hours, nor those who have read some of his *Tales of Travel*.

A year after that first trip he was back in Trans-Caspia, but bound this time for Persia, by one of its north-eastern gates. Once again he failed to obtain from the Russians the necessary franchise for the frontier, and, once again, taking the high hand, he started without



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authority, and of course got through. He paid a visit to Kuchan which embarrassed its suspicious khan, and then, giving his escort the slip, he turned up towards the goal of his last year's desire, Kalat-i-Nadiri, and, penetrated to the very gate of the forbidden fortress. It stood wide, and he should have pushed in; but he stopped to parley. The gate slammed and was not reopened; and the baffled Englishman had no choice but make the best of his way to Meshed and from its consulate start through Persia.

Curzon was not out to explore a vast country which even then was nowhere *terra incognita* except in isolated border-tracts of mountain or marshland. But though he had only the six months of a parliamentary recess at his disposal, he intended, as far as possible, to obtain some comprehension of the whole. His plan was to keep to main routes and frequented cities, travelling from Meshed to Teheran, thence by Kum and Isfahan to Shiraz, and finally by Bushire to Baghdad; for on such ways and in such societies he would find those who knew all the rest of the country. How industriously he gathered the harvest of other men's eyes has already been told.

On his return to England early in 1891, he not only sat down to write an exhaustive treatise on Persia, but pressed on the Royal Geographical Society, of whose council he became a member, a project for a new map of the country. This project was accepted, and under his tireless direction the compilation of the material was begun. Since, at that date, no trigonometrical survey had been carried out in Persia, a new map could be based only on collation of all available existing charts checked by travellers' time-records. For such a task Curzon's exhaustive reading of Persian travel-literature was the best possible qualification. He made a statement in 1892 to an evening meeting of the Society about the need for a map on the scale of sixty miles to the inch which had been used for the map of Tibet, and about his method of collecting and collating materials. The map proved itself incontestably superior to any predecessor, and though largely superseded now by surveys, Russian and other, undertaken since, it still retains a value.

In that same year appeared the two volumes on *Persia and the Persian Question* which constitute their author's most considerable single contribution to geographical—indeed to any—literature, and, in the world of books and science, will longest keep his name alive. They contain not only a most comprehensive exposition of the state of Persia in 1890, but also—it is of more enduring value—a collection, analysis, and co-ordination of all earlier authorities on the country. This is of such exhaustive completeness that further research in



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authorities prior to 1890 can safely be left aside. One could hardly venture to say so much of any other travel-book. Curzon's *Persia* has the faults of his *Russia in Central Asia*, but it has also its virtues and more beside. In covering a far wider field, the author sacrificed to breadth of treatment no jot or tittle of his meticulous detail. He devoted just as much care and space to what others had seen and done as to what he saw and did himself, and the book was as good a guide to unseen Azerbaijan or unseen Kerman as to the high roads over which its author actually travelled. Avowedly a compendium of information collected mainly at second-hand, it incurred (and acknowledged) many debts—that to General Houtoum Schindler in particular being deep and great. But however heavily it be discounted on this score, the exhaustive research that informs it, the thoroughness of its treatment, and the measure in which Curzon, in the course of a rapid tour, succeeded in grasping and assimilating the essential characteristics of both land and people, entitle it to an unquestioned place in the first rank of travel-literature, and its author equally without question to the honours of a geographer, who has advanced the science of the superficial features of the earth's surface. In combination with the new map, it prompted the award of the Royal Geographical Society's Gold Medal which was made to its author three years after its issue. Lord Curzon put it on record that none of his other honours, outside the domain of politics, gave him equal pleasure.

Before either book or map was off his hands, Curzon became, late in 1891, Under-Secretary of State for India; but, owing to a change of Government a few months later, this post offered only a sip of the sweets of office, not to be followed by a further taste for three years. No sooner, therefore, was his *Persia* issued, than he found himself once more free to go to Asia. The beaten track led him as far as Japan; but before the end of the year he had left it for Korea. He did no more, indeed, than cross the peninsula, but on the way he managed not only to spend several very strenuous days at Seoul, the capital, but also to see the monasteries of the Diamond Mountains. At Chemulpo he took ship for China, and went up to Peking by way of Tientsin, where he had an interview with the aged Viceroy, Li Hung Chang. Thence he made for French Indo-China, and passed down through each province from Tonkin to Cambodia. Since he was in Korea in December and at Angkor before the end of the following month, this tour allowed him little more than a glimpse of each land visited. In publishing narratives of it, he did not attempt anything on the scale of his *Persia*. The first part appeared in book form



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six months after his return, under a title, *Problems of the Far East*, which promised (and was intended to promise) purely political treatment. None the less, in his account of Korea he gave not only a detailed record of things seen, but also a general geographical and social description of great service to a large public ignorant of the consular and foreign authorities to which it was largely indebted. The record of the second half of his tour was relegated to a periodical, *The Geographical Journal*, for August and September, 1893, and was written more geographically. He confined this narrative almost wholly to things seen during a very brief visit, but the result was of considerable interest, as a record of the impression made by one of the least generally known European colonial enterprises upon a singularly observant and well-prepared mind.

In August, 1894, when *Problems of the Far East* left its author's hands, he reckoned his self-imposed task of examining 'the different aspects of the Asiatic Problem' to be more than half done. There remained, he wrote, only 'two other little-known Asiatic regions, directly bordering upon India'. What these were he did not specify; but, since he did proceed next to the Pamirs, one may guess that Chinese Turkestan or some part of it was the first of those regions. Whether the second was Afghanistan (to which he would, in fact, pay a flying visit before the end of the year) he never betrayed. Within a twelvemonth office had reclaimed him; and three years later his acceptance of the Viceroyalty of India precluded further possibility of unofficial wanderings in Asia.

The enterprise which now took him to India once more may have been intended for no more than a first instalment of a general exploration of Chinese Turkestan, on whose south-western verge the Pamirs lie; but, equally possibly, the Pamirs may have been the only part of the trans-Himalayan region where his political purpose would be served. Through them alone (always excepting the Afghan passes) was it reasonable to expect that a Russian descent on India might be attempted. But if a political motive (not, of course, expressly advertised) supplied the primary impulse to this journey (as, indeed, of all before it), Curzon wrote sincerely in *The Geographical Journal* for 1896, that a romantic curiosity about the source of the Oxus had urged him to the Pamirs; and no reader of his words about Bokhara and Samarkand, or of other words that he would write thereafter about Agra, Delhi, and Mandu, can doubt the reality of such an appeal to a mentality like his. As at Kalat i-Nadiri, there was a mystery; and he would not rest till he had solved it.

He went up from Kashmir by Gilgit, Hunza, and Baltit to the



Kilik Pass and the Chinese Pamirs, visiting all except the Great Pamir; and he established to his complete satisfaction that the southern claimant to the honour of originating the Oxus, namely the Panj stream, which rises as the Wakhjir in the Pamir-i-Wakhan, must be supported against all rivals, and especially against the Murghab. He insisted almost passionately on the more elevated cradle of the Panj, its greater length, its superior volume, and the more harmonious continuity of its valley with that of the lower Oxus. More geographers to-day agree with him than not, whereas before his visit opinion had inclined the other way. Nor was this identification his only geographical service. He stated clearly for the first time what should and should not be classed as a Pamir, and he swept into the scientific dustbin the legend that the Pamirs are the 'roof of the world'. When he came to publish his narrative he supplied an elaborate analytical account, not only of the whole region, but of its previous explorations, and a bibliography of the travellers and pilgrims.

This journey, by its difficulties and the remoteness and obscurity of the region into which it penetrated, came nearer to being a piece of geographical pioneering than any other journey that Curzon undertook; and the publication of it is the most purely geographical work of his pen. Nor need its merit be discounted because the explorer's political prominence secured him official furtherance which other men would not have enjoyed. No part of the Pamirs is God's country, and the best Turkman felt hut leaves much to be desired in a temperature which falls nightly below zero Fahrenheit. 'In a week', wrote Curzon, 'I parted with the accretions of an entire London season.' He finished the journey with a rapid ride to Kabul, and a return by Kandahar, and came back to England early in 1895 to receive in the summer the Geographical Medal which he had long desired.

To say that resumption of ministerial office in the autumn of 1895, followed by his tenure of the Viceroyalty from 1899 until the end of 1905, closed Curzon's career of geographical exploration is not by any means to imply that his interest in geographical matters ended then, or indeed would be any less serviceable to science. During the best part of a year, after he had undertaken the Under-Secretaryship of Foreign Affairs and the representation of the Foreign Office in the Commons, he still worked at the report of his journey in the Pamirs; and subsequently as Viceroy he repeatedly promoted and energetically furthered expeditions into the less known borderlands of India. Chief of those which owed much to him were the first Central Asian journey of Aurel Stein; the Kangchenjunga expedition of Douglas Freshfield in 1902; the Tibetan expedition in that same year and the following; and the



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Seistan Boundary Commission in 1905-6. Over the eventual presentation of the latter's geographical results by Major MacMahon to the Royal Geographical Society, Lord Curzon presided in person. Further, it was an autograph letter from the Viceroy to Douglas Freshfield in 1905, which first turned the eyes of the Alpine Club and the Royal Geographical Society towards Mount Everest. Had circumstances, then unforeseen, not led to his resignation a few months later, the first Everest expedition might have started at least fifteen years before it did, and even have taken the shorter track to the mountain through Nepal; for Lord Curzon had favoured this plan, and as Viceroy might well have found means to realize it.

As a young man, before more arduous travel engrossed him, Curzon had made holiday tours to Algeria, Egypt, Syria, and India, and been strongly attracted by the Arab or Saracenic style of art, especially as expressed in architecture. In later life he regarded the study of it as his speciality. Certainly by the time that he came to write his first travel-book in 1889, he showed unusual comparative knowledge of Saracenic monuments over all the range of their style and much familiarity with their detail; and he was able to add new points to what was known already, from Schuyler's elaborate descriptions, concerning the buildings of old Samarkand. He had grasped thus early the determining principle of Arab art.

'The true and essential character of the Saracenic style', he wrote, 'is expressed in grandeur rather than in delicacy, in chastity rather than in ornament. It was by the grouping of great masses and by the artistic treatment of simple lines, that the Arab architects first impressed their genius upon the world.'

Subsequently his knowledge was increased and his taste fed by his six months' tour in Persia and Mesopotamia, by further glimpses of Cairo and other Near Eastern cities, and by more experience of India. But the 'delight', to which he confessed, 'of seeing magnificent buildings, of realizing that in some cases they are not beyond repair, and of knowing that nothing except the want of money stands in the way of restoration' was marred in India by indignation at the state in which he found many of the most beautiful and famous. Seeing them neglected, dirty, choked inside and out with mean accretions, and often devoted to incongruous and unworthy uses, he felt keenly our responsibility for what he stigmatized as 'a utilitarianism which makes one shudder, and feats of desecration from which even a Goth would have shrunk'. 'This neglect', he wrote semi-officially in 1900, 'has been continuous, shocking, and, in my judgement, quite indefensible.'

As Viceroy, therefore, he went to India in 1899 with a deep sense of obligation to repair such neglect; and, fortified by very considerable knowledge of the character and history of its monuments, he had already framed in his mind a policy to be pursued in regard to them and to Indian archaeology in general. Accordingly, he had hardly come down from his first season in the hills before he declared himself, on the 1st of November, at a dinner held in his honour by the Asiatic Society of Calcutta. The assurance then given that work on the monuments would be his primary care was followed by a series of visits to monuments themselves, and of speeches to those who ought to provide for their better keeping. 'I accept the conservation of the ancient monuments of India as an elementary obligation of Government', he said to the Municipality of Brindaban in December; and on the same day, paying a first official visit to Agra, where so much of his archaeological interest was to be focused in years to come, he added, 'I shall not rest satisfied until in each case the structure has been rendered secure against the ravages of further decay, and has received such attention as may be feasible and desirable in faithful renovation or reproduction of that which has been injured or destroyed.'

It is no doubt true that the monuments, which then and later were foremost in his mind, were the work of the Moslem conquerors of Northern India. Their style was that of his predilection; the pomp that they express appealed to his idiosyncrasy; they are most familiar to the cultivated world at large; and they stand where a Viceroy, who must pass repeatedly between Calcutta and Simla, can most easily find occasion to call. But his critics who went on to allege that he had eyes for no others did not do Lord Curzon justice. Sir John Marshall, whom he called to India, writes that the Viceroy was far from neglecting the other monuments:

'There were few really important remains of the ancient and medieval periods that he did not at some time visit and take steps to preserve. . . . When I myself came out to take over the direction of the new department, he gave me a list of many Hindu and Buddhist monuments which needed more careful overhauling than he himself had been able to give; and in the summer time at Simla, he used to have me up regularly once a week, go through pending cases, and decide on the action to be taken.'

The official files contain lengthy correspondence initiated and conducted by the Viceroy about very many non-Moslem monuments, some of which are among the most remote in India—for example, a certain sculptured monolith in an obscure Madras village, whose



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existence Lord Curzon himself learned from forgotten records, and revealed to the provincial administration.

In his speech to the Asiatic Society of Calcutta, Lord Curzon had expressed his feelings strongly; but he could, and did, put the case more strongly still. Where he had not found unarrested decay, he did too often find cheap and summary restoration, or the 'universal whitewash' of the Public Works Department. He was never tired, for instance, of inveighing against that department for what it had done twenty years before to prepare for the visit of Edward, Prince of Wales. But, in fact, what he particularly hated was not, and is not at this day, a practice only of Public Works Departments. All Orientals (and many besides who are not of the East) regard clean whitewash as in the best taste, and a fresh coat as due to any visitor of special distinction. A yellow variety of it was splashed all over the Aksa Mosque at Jerusalem for the Kaiser's visit in 1899; and at Abu Lord Curzon had to stand speechless before hardly dried evidence of a similar compliment paid to himself. His horror of whitewash soon became so well known and so greatly feared from one end of India to the other that once, it is said,¹ a Buddhist cave-temple was carefully *blackened* from floor to ceiling before the Viceregal visit!

Much of the blame Lord Curzon laid at military doors. The civil authority should be supreme, he thought, in such matters. 'I have never been able', he minuted at a later date, 'to get a thing done by military authorities through a Local Government without inordinate delay.' Their collective philistinism he held incurable, and he flouted such pleas of military necessity as were obstinately (and sometimes successfully) opposed to his demands. He never got, for example, the glacis of the Delhi Fort levelled or the Fort at Lahore evacuated. He was perhaps too quick to criticize those in military command where traditions of the Mutiny were still strong, and to expect taste like his own of men fresh from the utilitarian ugliness of Aldershot and Salisbury Plain. All facts considered, it is wonderful that he got so much evacuated in India and Burma as he did in his six years—so many latrines and commissariat stores and barrack notice-boards removed from convenient locations in or near buildings of Shah Jehan or Akbar, who, perhaps, would have been less shocked by their presence than he! Soldiers, however, were not his only culprits. He charged much to the Local Governments which starved such antiquities officers as they employed, appropriated pittances to conservation and restoration, and for lack of close supervision and keenness of interest,

¹ Letter already cited from Sir John Marshall.



allowed the perpetration of all sorts of what he was fond of styling atrocities. But his severest reflections were reserved for the Supreme Government, as was only just; for what could be expected of subordinate Governments, if no sign of interest was shown from on high, if no mandate was given to spend liberally on monuments, and if Local Treasuries were taxed to their full capacity to meet mandates of different purpose?

During a decade or more there had been no officer at head-quarters entrusted with the care of monuments and antiquities; nor had the Directors-General of Archaeology, who had existed for a while after 1871, been commissioned to conserve and restore so much as to direct historical research. The total appropriation to all purposes of the Service of Antiquities, including the salaries of the provincial archaeological surveyors, had fallen below £10,000 a year for the whole of India. The Viceroy now determined that not only should there be again a Director-General, but one of a new type, a young scholar from the classical field of European archaeology, untainted by the governmental tradition of India. He rejected the claims of all existing archaeological surveyors, judging them 'insufficiently equipped', as indeed he admitted was to be expected of their relatively humble rank in the hierarchy. Nor would he accept any mere historian or amateur archaeologist, however qualified by Indian experience, or well esteemed in India and Whitehall; and in this attitude he was supported by Sir A. Macdonell, whose care of the antiquities of the North-West Province he had commended as exceptional. What he did was to write in 1901 to Sir Edward Maunde Thompson of the British Museum that he desired a classical scholar, under the age of thirty, associated (if one there was) with the work begun in Crete in the preceding year, whose report had deeply impressed him. Sir Edward referred the matter to Dr. A. S. Murray, Keeper of the Department of Greek and Roman Antiquities, who, after consulting the Cretan diggers, reported that only one man with Cretan experience fulfilled all the prescribed conditions, namely, Mr. J. H. Marshall, late scholar of King's and member of the British School at Athens, who had served one excavation season, showing marked ability, versatility, and initiative. Accordingly he was recommended, and was accepted by both Whitehall and the Viceroy, on condition of spending some months in preliminary studies of Indian archaeology and vernaculars. When it became known that a young man of twenty-five, without previous experience of India or any province of Oriental archaeology, had been preferred to the Director-Generalship, some cavilling, not unnaturally, was heard; and there was even a threat of protest by friends of the



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existing archaeological staff and others interested in Indian antiquities. But it came to nothing. Mr. Marshall duly reached India in 1902, and took up his duties on a five-year tenure. Since he is still there, it need hardly be added that he made good.

The appointment of a Director-General with express mandate to conserve and restore, as well as to research, meant that larger funds, more supervision, and some uniformity of aim would be brought to bear on the monuments throughout India. That was much. It was more that from the start he would be assured of the support of the Viceroy. But it was most, that his appointment at head-quarters committed the Supreme Government to an interest and a policy of which he and his staff would be an outward and visible sign to the Local Governments. The creation of this interest and the promotion of this policy stand to Lord Curzon's credit. He alone could, and, in a measure, did, make archaeology officially fashionable. Other Viceroys, notably Lords Dufferin and Lytton, had interested themselves in the Indian monuments. But none before Lord Curzon had insisted on his interest being shared by the whole administrative body; none by unremitting precept and example had compelled that interest so to be maintained that it could become traditional.

His precepts were conveyed by public speeches delivered at complimentary feasts or in reply to the compliments of municipalities and other official and semi-official bodies; by lengthy minutes written in his own hand upon head-quarter files, and by autograph correspondence with Governors of Presidencies and Provinces as well as with the Secretary of State at home; by inspired letters of the Private Secretary to District Commissioners and other local authorities, and by personal semi-public allocutions, when the Viceroy had visited, critically examined, and often disapproved their works of conservation and repair; finally, and most effectively, by orders in detail, dictated on the spot, and annotated subsequently by the Viceroy himself. From 1899 until Mr. Marshall's arrival in 1903, Lord Curzon was his own Director-General. He began, and persevered with, a series of personal visits to the places of archaeological importance; to some he returned again and again. Agra, for example, knew the fearful joy of five Viceregal inspections in six years.

On such visits Lord Curzon prefaced and followed his precepts by example. Before giving (as he said of himself) 'minute instructions on every point' of conservation and restoration to a local authority or government engineer, he usually had found time both to read up the pertinent literature and to examine the monument itself with the eye of a clerk of the works. Of the Agra Fort he wrote in 1900,



‘I tested a good many of the columns and could find no trace of earlier stucco’ below nineteenth-century plaster. So he ordered the red sandstone to be stripped of the whitewash which had been laid on for the Prince of Wales’s behoof a quarter of a century earlier. When it was gone, however, the stucco proved to be, in fact, of earlier and probably original date. The Viceroy became at once as insistent for its conservation as he had been for its removal, his principle from first to last being to preserve every original feature, and never to restore, unless the perished work of a first builder were certainly known and could worthily be reproduced. His final order in 1902 ran, ‘Replace the plaster where recently removed under the impression that the original pillars were plain red sandstone’. It was a fine example of loyalty in practice to a principle, whatever the sacrifice of *amour propre*. At Bhubaneswar he scrambled on to a roof to overlook the shrines and detect decay. At Chitor ‘I climbed up the bamboo scaffolding round the Tower (of Fame) to the top and crawled up the staircase inside’. At Dhar he groped through holes in a Mihrab wall. At Mandu he measured the remains of a red sandstone elephant for comparison with the elephants of Delhi (‘I made a study of stone elephants three years ago’). And so at a dozen other places.

How strenuously these Viceregal inspections were conducted Sir John Marshall shall bear witness:

‘I call to mind a day spent with him—one of many—in the Fort at Agra. It was a broiling hot day at the end of April. We had been to the Taj at daybreak and after breakfast went on to the Fort; and there we stayed until sunset, toiling backwards and forwards amid the fiercely hot buildings, examining plans and estimates, and taking down directions for the further progress of the work.’

And such visits were followed by research in his library at Government House, rich in the works of former visitors to the monuments of India. Thence he would write to those whom he had left to execute his orders in the provinces, calling their attention to such and such a traveller’s mention or illustration of a minaret, a parapet, or what not, that should be taken into account in the restoration.

A charge of over-restoring monuments (principally Moghul) has been laid at Lord Curzon’s door. On this count I once more call Sir John Marshall.

‘No one could have been more scrupulous in preserving the authenticity of a building, or more averse from renovation, unless the reasons for it were unassailable. His critics on this score have been people who either never set foot on the shores of India or never



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understood that conditions in this country, with its tropical climate, its luxuriant jungle-growths, and its other destructive agencies, demand far more radical and permanent measures of conservation than are necessary in the West.

It should also be borne in mind that in numerous instances the Indian conservator has to face the same difficulty that troubles the archaeological committee which is charged with the repair of the crumbling mosques of Cairo—namely, that this or that building is required by the population to continue to serve the purpose for which originally it was erected. It cannot, therefore, if treated at all, be left to be merely a picturesque ruin or an archaeological specimen. It must be restored not only to water-tight and sun-tight condition, but also, as far as possible, to the grace with which its original builders endowed it.

Lord Curzon's personal part in the execution of work that he had initiated was not always confined to inquiries about, and inspections of, its progress, or to further criticisms, revisions, and suggestions. Sometimes it took the shape of additional embellishments to be made partly or wholly at his own costs. One of his dearest wishes was to see the restoration of the Diwan-i-Am at Delhi completed by restitution of certain mosaic panels which a Frenchman of Bordeaux was supposed to have made for Shah Jehan and inserted in the walls of the recess behind the throne. Twelve of these had found their way to South Kensington, having been extracted during or after the Mutiny and sold for £500. The Viceroy made personal application to the India Office asking its mediation with the Board of Education and offering to refund the original cost. In the course of a few months the request was granted without any refund being required; and the panels were duly returned to Delhi. There remained, however, before complete restoration could be attempted, the question of reconstructing other panels, irretrievably lost. Coloured drawings existed of them, but it was doubtful if the requisite stones could be found in India, and certain that no Indian *mosaicista* could execute the designs. The Acting Consul-General for Italy was consulted concerning the possibility of importing workmen from Florence or Carrara, and, in the meantime, specimens of Indian stones were collected. Finally, after two years, Lord Curzon himself wrote to the British Ambassador in Rome, invoking his help towards discovery of some Florentine *mosaicista*, able and willing to bring out the requisite materials and do the work. A man was found, and when he sailed from Genoa in August the Viceroy personally contributed half his agreed pay and fifty pounds towards his passage. Many other in-



stances could be cited of Lord Curzon's readiness to restore at his own expense the lost beauties of Indian buildings: for example, he made persevering efforts to procure in Cairo a lamp for the dome of the Taj, efforts which were relaxed only when it became clear that neither a medieval lamp of sufficient size nor a workman capable of reproducing the polychrome glass of the fourteenth century was likely to be forthcoming. Subsequently one was procured.

X Lord Curzon had all the cultivated Briton's love of clearing away incongruous accretions which mask a comprehensive view of a monument, and of setting the jewel again in an environment of greenery. This praiseworthy passion can be over indulged. But what Lord Curzon did to open out the Taj and restore its garden setting is generally approved. Indian accretions are usually neither medieval nor picturesque, but recent, squalid, sordid, and noisome. The Viceroy was very well aware at the outset that in dirt and stench the spirit of the East finds little incongruity or offence. Had he had any illusions his official experiences would soon have killed them. At Lahore, in 1899, he presented to the Mosque of Wazir Khan a stand for its Quran, and to the courtyard of the Bad-Shahi Mosque a lamp. All was well, and the Moslem society expressed its respectful thanks. In 1902 the Viceroy dropped on the city unannounced, to find the lamp uncleared since its presentation, and the stand encrusted with pigeons' droppings. On that occasion he insisted on exploring the interior of a little building, 'really very beautiful', as he wrote, 'with red sandstone porch richly carved with heavy brackets', which was occupied by a Eurasian woman, a man in bed, and 'a pervading air of squalor'. Three years later he penetrated that building again. The same woman was in occupation, with the same man in the same bed, and the squalor as before. No wonder he declared that he would not 'hand back to the dirt and defilement of Asiatic religious practices' buildings which had been 'saved from the uncultured neglect of white men'; and it was to preclude such reversions that he pushed and passed in 1903 an Ancient Monuments Preservation Bill.

The *incuria* of white men, rather than brown, most often vexed him—*incuria* of Madras Councillors, who did not know that they had an archaeological surveyor; of the Lahore soldiers who would not clear out of the fort and those who maintained a commissariat store masking the stone elephant before the Lahore gate of the fort at Delhi, and of the civil authority there which used the Moti Musjid—an early and peculiar favourite of Lord Curzon's—as a departmental treasury, and could hardly be induced



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to quit in 1903; the parsimony of the works services at Delhi, which devoted to the annual repair and maintenance of the Diwan-i-Khas the princely allowance of 375 rupees; *incuria* of civilians who used the Mandalay Palace for offices and a club, and of soldiers who stored powder in the Agra Fort. Essentially an autocratic individualist who played his hand alone, Lord Curzon was irritated beyond measure by the collective philistinism and mediocrity of view which mark the policy of all bureaucracies. Sometimes he remembered, sometimes he forgot, that officers and officials might individually be ill represented by their collective policy, but powerless to leaven the lump; and that only a Viceroy could stand outside and above the collective opinion of the bureaucracy, and produce a general change. But if he was hard on those who had not his powers and opportunity, it stands to his lasting credit that, so far as he was concerned, he made full and admirable use of both his own powers and his own opportunities in the cause of archaeology, art, and taste, and this without thought of reaping any political advantage.

When Lord Curzon finally left India in November 1905 he reckoned that the 88,450 rupees spent annually on archaeology before his arrival had swelled to 353,000. Below that figure he refused to contemplate any ultimate saving upon the Archaeological Service's budget, for its establishment would always have new work to do. 'In the course of the last five years', he wrote at the end of 1903, 'I have spent from £80,000 to £100,000 on archaeological repairs'; and a year and a half earlier he said that more had been done towards repair and restoration in different parts of India during 'the past three years than in any previous twenty'. Nor had the money been expended without close count of cost. 'Nearly all first estimates in India . . . are nonsense', he wrote in 1900 to Lord Northcote. 'I invariably reject the first estimate with contumely—I ultimately get exactly the same thing, or at least all that I want, for about one-third of the sum.' It goes without saying that in India, as elsewhere, before and after, Lord Curzon's path was marked by casualties and discontents. But undoubtedly he saved a mint of public money; and what in fact he did get for his pains may fitly be indicated in prophetic words of his own whose ultimate fulfilment general consent attests to-day. 'By the time I leave India I believe it may be said with truth that the Agra monuments will be the best tended, just as they are the best and most beautiful body of architectural remains in the world.' Had it been suggested in 1905 that when all the acts of his Viceroyalty should come to be appraised after twenty years, those monuments would be agreed his most abiding memorial, would he have 'scouted the idea with



contumely' (to use his frequent phrase)? or would he have reflected that, when all is said and done, those same monuments are the most abiding memorials also of Akbar and Shah Jehan?

Certainly another intellectual crusade upon which Lord Curzon embarked in India with like zeal, like energy, and, it may be added, like faith in his own logic and congenital principles, has left no mark so permanent. Therein he found himself opposed by another logic and other principles on a matter of much more instant and vital interest to the people at large. This was Education. In a matter of monuments, of which, as has been noted already, those chiefly affected by the Viceroy's own efforts were alien, India, conscious of no principle or canon of taste of her own, accepted the imposition of an ideal, not displeased by Western homage to her treasures. But when the Viceroy would endorse and enforce a Western ideal of education through means inspired by traditions of Eton and Oxford, native indifference warmed to apprehension and boiled over in opposition.

From Lord Curzon's own standpoint—based on a deliberate conviction that no other than a Western civilization could possibly be envisaged by an educational system framed and conducted by ourselves—reform was imperative and his policy very soundly conceived. He found on taking over the Viceroyalty that the system of education, which had been developed since the issue of Sir Charles Wood's famous dispatch, still failed not only to affect an adequate proportion of Indians (not one in ten of the male and not one in forty of the female children attended any of its schools), but also to make good citizens of the remainder. The forms of Western civilization might be assimilated, but very rarely with anything of its spirit. Primary Schools were neglected as not conducing immediately to government employ or social advancement. Secondary Schools, few in number, had not developed corporate spirit or moral influence. The Universities, fed by affiliated colleges which were little better than competitive cramming establishments, offered little or no instruction, contenting themselves with examining memorized knowledge, which would be discarded so soon as its possessor found a salaried place. Men enrolled themselves there not to learn but to earn.

Refusing to entertain a doubt of the end to which Indian education had long been directed, Lord Curzon did not regard the system itself as at fault. What was wrong was the spirit in which, in practice, it was ensued by those, far too few, who took advantage of it at all; and responsibility for that spirit he laid chiefly at the door of the Supreme Government. Having formulated and prescribed an exotic



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system, it had not realized how far it was incumbent on itself to direct and control the working and ensure financial means. Not only were budget appropriations far too small, but also, for lack not only of a Director-General, but even of any specifically Educational Department of the Supreme Government, control of the spending of those appropriations was very insufficient, and there was neither uniformity in the working of the system nor a common standard of requirement from either teachers or students.

He began at the top with proposals for the reform of the Calcutta University, of which, *ex officio*, he was Chancellor. He had two principal positive griefs, and any number of negative ones. First, the so-called Fellows, who formed the Senate, were at once far too numerous and too largely recruited from non-academic persons of local influence or conspicuous wealth. Second, the University examined without having educated, leaving the latter function to affiliated colleges of various and dubious educational standards and efficiency. The Chancellor demanded a teaching University with corporate life and spirit, to be promoted by the residence of students in worthy buildings and academic environment, that is, *mutatis mutandis*, an Indian Oxford or Cambridge. Since, however, he might easily have found universities, even in England, with features not unlike both those that he specially condemned at Calcutta, but producing very unlike results, it was hardly so self-evident, as he assumed, that his two positive griefs really touched the root of the failure of University education in India.

In advocating Technical and Agricultural Colleges to supplement too literary an education, and in proposing Training Colleges and Normal Schools the Viceroy trod less disputable ground. Nor could much exception be taken to his criticism of the affiliated colleges, and of the school organization, secondary and primary. If the established system was to continue in existence at all, much reform and considerable extension were obviously called for. Fees must be not competitive, but uniform; incompetent teachers and unsuitable insanitary buildings must be replaced. Above all more public money had, he maintained, to be spent, and consequently more efficient control must be exercised by the State. The Primary Schools should be a first charge on provincial revenues, follow a uniform syllabus, and teach in the vernacular. 'Ever since the cold breath of Macaulay's rhetoric passed over the field of Indian languages and Indian text-books', said the Viceroy, 'the elementary education of the people in their own tongues has shrivelled and pined.' An Educational Conference, convened at Simla in 1901, applauded all this declaration of policy; but less general assent met



the Viceroy's condemnation of purely vocational instruction in Secondary Schools, where, however, he declared himself not averse from developing voluntary commercial and industrial courses subsidiary to a compulsory literary curriculum.

When, as he said of himself, he attacked 'with a burning zeal the subject of educational reform' he knew his risks. Late in 1901 he brought out a Director-General chosen from the staff of the London Board of Education. In the two following years new Primary Schools rose by the thousand, and facilities for female instruction were doubled. But criticism continued to be vocal, and, at times, virulent, exception being taken first and foremost to the inevitable increase of Government control. The battle raged chiefly over and in the Universities; but the Viceroy refusing to be longer responsible for 'dispensing an imperfect education through imperfect instruments to imperfect products with imperfect results' was not deterred from pressing a Universities Bill through the Legislature early in 1904. In spite of strenuous opposition, the tenure of the 'Fellowships' was cut down to five years, the Chancellor undertaking to choose two-fifths of his nominees from the teaching profession. The increased Government control which must be accepted at first should be relaxed so soon as the new Senates, which would still be in great majority native, got into working order. These and many changes of detail the Viceroy felt sure would 'check tendencies that were leading to demoralization'. But he dared not be sanguine of speedy positive results. It would be long enough, he confessed in public, before 'a new heaven and a new earth' would 'dawn upon Higher Education in India'. Like many other apostles of Western civilization, he knew that in the East its spirit can not be breathed into its forms without such a change in mental outlook, as Lord Cromer reluctantly admitted must take at least two Egyptian generations. One most serious handicap to the realization of his ideal of education by residential colleges was always in his mind. An Eton and Oxford man could not but be aware how much religious teaching has done in the past to form the present spirit of Universities and Public Schools in England. The influence of a State Church on the great English seminaries may be much diminished now; but if it had never been great, one wonders how much sense of sweet reason and of corporate honour would inform their social code to-day. Yet from any use of that influence, Lord Curzon admitted that the Supreme Government of India must for ever be debarred.

Two years after his return from India Lord Curzon became Chancellor of another and very different University; and under other



and very different conditions he again embarked on the sea of reform. He shaped and held on his course at Oxford with the same tireless energy and the same determination to master every detail of the institution that he had taken in hand, presiding continually over councils and committees and personally taking evidence from all sorts and conditions of men. The eventual Report which he submitted to the University in 1909 attested as searching and discriminating a study of a great academic system as has ever been undertaken and published by a single individual; and when it is remembered that this individual was one who during thirty years had been, not a resident in the University, but a traveller, a minister, and a Viceroy, immersed in foreign affairs and absorbed in national administration, his Report must be admitted a most masterly performance—and this after all allowance has been made for the various help freely given to its author from within the University, and also for the fact that all the principal lines of academic reform had already been laid down by more than one Commission and been common talk for half a century. However much it owed to others, every page of that Report is instinct with Lord Curzon's personality, and obviously every recommendation in it has passed through the crucible of his mind. Thus it is distinguished from all Commission Reports with their inevitable stratification, adjustments, compromise verdicts, and minority reservations. Reform is rarely popular, and one reformer, playing his hand alone, knows what to expect. The Chancellor's Report was a target for much angry criticism in 1909. Now, when remembered, it is spoken of as kindly as, doubtless, under Rehoboam's scorpions they spoke of the whips of Solomon. Astonishingly little in general or in detail divides its judgements from those of the Royal Commission, which more than a dozen years later has gone over the same ground; and none now will grudge a tribute to the comprehensive grasp and the prescient judgement which made one man's findings so largely anticipate those of a dozen Commissioners.

It was, professedly, a reasoned statement of a case, rather than a judgement. The University's Council, not the Chancellor, was to decide whether, or what, action should be taken in the direction of reform; and, no doubt, it proved a disappointment to Lord Curzon, after the principles upon which most of his recommendations were based had been accepted by the Council, that so few of these were embodied immediately in legislation and carried into practice. But, not only were there others of which some beginning of realization at once ensued, but there were more which have borne fruit in the work of the subsequent Statutory Commission.



In 1911 Lord Curzon, now created an Earl, was elected President of the Royal Geographical Society, on whose Council he had served as an ordinary member before his Viceroyalty, and as a Vice-President after his return. He accepted election with two chief aims in view. The first was to move the head-quarters of the Society from the house in Savile Row, which had become too small for its growing activities, library, and collections; the other to insist on grants and other encouragements to explorers being conditional upon really scientific work and results. To the realization of the first purpose, which involved such an immediate and concrete proposition as he loved, he brought all his energy. He collected about £40,000 by personal solicitation and by letters, all written with his own hand and varied according to his conception of the idiosyncrasy of each recipient; he tirelessly quartered the West End in search of some well placed and roomy house, set in such surroundings as would admit of future extensions and, in particular, of a building to serve as a meeting-hall; and he told all and sundry of his quest. After some disappointments in the Central quarters, he learned from Mr. Speaker Lowther that the latter's house and land in Kensington Gore were to be had. The price was stiff, but overbearing all objections whether to the situation or to the outlay, he closed with the vendor, sold the Society's premises in Savile Row, and within a twelvemonth had its head-quarters transferred to Kensington. Towards the new installation he contributed infinite personal pains, himself settling the uses of the different rooms, the arrangement of the Society's pictures and Museum, and the lay-out of the garden, exacting the while no less energy and devotion from every member of the staff. From the first he contemplated re-sale of half the garden, in order to provide further funds for a hall, and he had all but achieved his aim when the outbreak of the European War cancelled negotiations, which he would not live to see brought again so near to conclusion. But he had the satisfaction of knowing that he had housed his Society more spaciously and amenably than any other learned body in London.

In pursuit of his other original purpose he did much to enhance the Society's scientific reputation by stiffening its requirements from explorers, especially in the matter of surveys, on which he used to insist as the first condition of a money grant. If it has to be admitted that now and then he insisted over-much to the disadvantage of some who proposed pioneer ventures into lands too dangerous for survey operations, he effectually discouraged the globe-trotter, who is too often accepted by the public as a geographical explorer. His term as President ended in 1914, and after the War he rarely appeared again at the



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Society's house or meetings ; but he remained one of its two Trustees, and gladly gave help in emergencies when influence was needed. His only other geographical activity to be chronicled is a study of the question of resonant sands, which makes a long chapter in *Tales of Travel*, published about a year before his death.

The scanty leisure which ministerial and other public duties allowed him in his last years was in large part spent on historical and archaeological studies relating to three residences, Tattersall Castle, Bodiam Castle, and Montacute House, which he had set himself to restore and embellish ; on the publication of two volumes which he entitled *British Government in India*, but devoted chiefly to the history of the Viceregal residences and their successive occupants, and also of the *Tales of Travel* already mentioned ; and in a search for Napoleonic relics and books to supplement the Broadley Collection which he had purchased and would ultimately devise to the University of Oxford. Further he worked on a series of monographs concerned with each of the houses that he had inherited or acquired ; but only one of these was printed before his death which followed a sudden and brief illness on 20th March, 1925, in the course of his sixty-seventh year.

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